

## Big Bend Yearbook 2010

By Charlotte Crane - 4/1/2010

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# LEON COUNTY

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While the three-county Tallahassee metro area lost 4,000 jobs last year, unemployment is low compared to the state overall. Among the reasons: The comparatively stable employment base provided by state government and education and university research that has translated into innovative startups, says Julie Harrington, director of Florida State University's Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis.

There's some expansion in the manufacturing sector, but construction is still off dramatically, says Kim Williams, chairman of the Economic Development Council of Tallahassee/Leon County and president of Marpan Supply. Danfoss Turbocor, which makes air-conditioning compressors, is "cautiously optimistic" for the coming year, says Doug Bishop, vice president for sales and marketing. "Because of the length of time for construction projects in an economic downturn, we're among the last to be affected and last to turn around as well."

### Person to Watch

» "We formed to serve the Florida biotech industry; it's new and growing rapidly," says Greg Dudley, an associate professor of organic chemistry at Florida State University. Florida Custom Synthesis, the year-old company he founded, manufactures organic compounds, active ingredients for future pharmaceuticals. Currently at three employees, it could begin expanding and hiring when it moves this spring into its permanent space in a technology incubator being built by FSU.

### Business to Watch

» Syn-Tech Systems, which makes fueling systems and accessories, realized sales increases of 18% in 2008 and 27% in 2009. Last year it created 25 positions; it hired 10 more employees this January, for a total of 171. This year's growth is expected to be similar to 2009's. "These increases result from the fact our systems pay for themselves through direct cost savings in providing management of petroleum products, coupled with the fact that prices for these products (diesel fuel, unleaded gasoline and home heating oil) remain high," says CEO Doug Dunlap.

### Who's Hiring

» Global CNC Solutions of Tallahassee, which makes metal and plastic parts for industries, laboratories and the military, needs five more employees in addition to 12 already on staff. Supporting growth: Diversification, plus existing customers who are in fields not affected by the recession.

» Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare hired 214 from November to February and 974 during all of 2009. Its greatest needs continue to be for registered nurses, licensed healthcare professionals, clinical support and service workers.

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## HAMILTON/SUWANNEE/MADISON COUNTIES

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Job losses affected Hamilton and Suwannee counties, along with neighboring Columbia County, when PCS Phosphate at White Springs, Hamilton County's largest employer, cut 168 from its 900-employee work force last fall, a reduction blamed on the weak economy. PCS Phosphate's White Springs operation includes two chemical plants and a phosphate mine, producing mainly for fertilizer and animal feed markets. "2009 was a bad year across the board, and no exception here," says PCS spokesman Mike Williams.

Similarly, several neighboring counties were adversely affected a year ago when Pilgrim's Pride at Live Oak, Suwannee's largest employer, filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy and laid off more than 500 employees, one-third of its work force. Since last summer, however, the company has hired 650 employees at Live Oak, for a total of 1,400 at the plant, feed mill and hatchery. A Brazilian meat company purchased a majority stake in Pilgrim's Pride last year.

Edward Meggs, president and CEO of Madison County Community Bank and chairman of the Madison County Development Council, says two recently opened travel centers are contributing to tax revenues while also demonstrating that recent county infrastructure improvements at highway interchanges are paying off.

### Business to Watch

» After two years of planning, Adage's biopower project could be coming to fruition soon, pending the signing of a power purchase agreement, says Hamilton County coordinator Danny Johnson. The project will provide 400 construction jobs plus more than 125 permanent jobs in power production and fuel collection. The plant is the first of a dozen planned nationwide by Adage, a joint venture of Areva, an electricity transmission company, and Duke Energy Corp.

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## LAFAYETTE/COLUMBIA COUNTIES

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"Business is really dropping off," says Jim Hollis, Lafayette County Chamber of Commerce chairman. Last year's Pilgrim's Pride cutbacks had tragic secondary effects in his county, says Hollis: "That put close to a dozen chicken farms in our county out of business, and it laid off a lot of people."

2009 wasn't a good year, says Jim Poole, executive director for Columbia County Industrial Development Authority. [Photo: Ray Stanyard]

Except for carryover business development from 2008 — a year that brought two distribution centers plus retail and hospitality businesses to Columbia County — 2009 wasn't a good year, says Jim Poole, executive director for Columbia County Industrial Development Authority. "We're working on some things, though. We have one of the catalyst sites" — a site in one of Florida's three Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern designated for state funding to jump-start economic projects. "Target is a light manufacturing company."

### Business to Watch

» Plum Creek, Florida's largest private landowner, is partnering with Columbia County, CSX and state and local agencies on the proposed development of an inland port on 2,000 acres of company land; Plum Creek also owns the 500-acre catalyst site. The proposed port site would be accessible to the Jacksonville seaport via CSX rail and I-10 and also link to I-75. "We think there's a strong potential there for logistics and distribution and light manufacturing," says Poole.

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## JEFFERSON/GADSDEN/WAKULLA COUNTIES

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"Industries hiring are staffing companies and state and local government. We also have job orders for healthcare and information technology. It's the small companies, not the big companies, bringing in jobs."

— Kimberly Moore,  
CEO of Workforce Plus,  
regional workforce board for Leon,  
Gadsden and Wakulla counties

To spur economic development, Jefferson County has adopted an ordinance offering grant incentives to businesses providing new jobs or capital investment. Being considered: Development of a master plan and completion of infrastructure work to make the county-owned industrial park industry-ready.

Construction at Adage's second biopower company could possibly start by midyear; at startup, it will employ about 125. Most existing businesses, however, are in survival mode, says David Gardner, executive director of the Gadsden Chamber of Commerce and economic development. "I have to be the cheerleader, but I hear the stories of their concern."

"Tourism development is where we see our growth right now," says Mary Ellen Davis, chairman of the Wakulla County Economic Development Council.

### Business to Watch

» Applied Fiber, founded in 2003 and based in Havana, is a growing technology business manufacturing high-performance cable assemblies using light-weight, high-strength synthetic fibers. It provides cable assemblies for the oil and gas industries, commercial marine uses, architectural firms, sporting goods companies and the medical industry.

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## TAYLOR/GILCHRIST COUNTIES

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Perry in Taylor County recently completed a restoration of the Live Oak Perry and Gulf Railroad train station for use as a business incubator; it's fully occupied, housing economic development agencies and four shops. A Holiday Inn and three retailers also opened recently, adding jobs and tax dollars, says city manager Bob

Brown. "And we've had no big closures. We have good things going on, and we're on the cusp of a lot of better things" — among them gas pipeline construction.

For Gilchrist County, the combination of local ad valorem decreases and expected state cutbacks could mean a county revenue reduction this year of \$750,000 to \$1 million, says county administrator Ron McQueen. "We're concerned this could mean layoffs; we've reduced operating revenue to the bone in the past two years."

Business to Watch

» Buckeye Florida, a wood cellulose manufacturing plant near Perry, is partnering with the University of Florida to build a facility for cellulosic ethanol research projects, aided by UF's \$20-million grant from the Legislature. Groundbreaking was in March. Buckeye also is installing a condensing steam turbine, a biomass-fueled generating project that will increase its green-energy reliance from 87% to 92%; construction, to be completed by the fall, is providing 148 jobs. A third project, research with UF on different kinds of biomass, began in 2009.

» **Jobs**

MSA	Jan. 2009	Jan. 2010	% Change	Jobless Rate
<b>Tallahassee</b>	179,076	175,721	-1.9%	8.9%

Source: Agency for Workforce Innovation

» **Homes**  
Single-family existing-home sales by Realtors

MSA	Jan. 2010 Sales	1-Year Change	Jan. 2010 Price	1-Year Change
<b>Tallahassee/Leon</b>	70	-16%	\$180,000	+12%

Source: Florida Association of Realtors

» **Population Totals**

2.4% or higher    1.0%-2.4%    1.0% or less

County	Average Annual Growth		Trend
	2010	2006-2010	
<b>Columbia</b>	72,117	1.95%	
<b>Gadsden</b>	48,099	1.07	
<b>Gilchrist</b>	17,749	1.73	
<b>Hamilton</b>	14,779	1.18	
<b>Jefferson</b>	14,950	0.71	
<b>Lafayette</b>	8,184	0.72	
<b>Leon</b>	274,013	1.55	
<b>Madison</b>	19,226	0.41	
<b>Suwannee</b>	41,004	1.53	
<b>Taylor</b>	21,874	2.18	

<b>Wakulla</b>	32,631	2.91
<b>Florida</b>	18,910,672	1.21%

» **Population by Age**

County	Years of Age (2010)					TOTAL
	0-14	15-19	20-39	40-64	65+	
<b>Columbia</b>	18.5%	6.2%	28.4%	31.2%	15.9%	72,117
<b>Gadsden</b>	20.2	6.1	27.7	32.3	13.7	48,099
<b>Gilchrist</b>	17.6	7.0	29.8	28.9	16.6	17,749
<b>Hamilton</b>	17.4	5.5	32.2	32.5	12.3	14,779
<b>Jefferson</b>	15.2	5.3	27.5	36.0	16.0	14,950
<b>Lafayette</b>	16.5	5.5	36.9	28.4	12.7	8,184
<b>Leon</b>	17.1	8.2	34.8	30.3	9.6	274,013
<b>Madison</b>	17.7	6.5	28.9	30.9	15.9	19,226
<b>Suwannee</b>	18.6	5.7	26.2	30.3	19.2	41,004
<b>Taylor</b>	16.0	5.4	30.5	33.0	15.2	21,874
<b>Wakulla</b>	16.9	5.6	30.0	34.2	13.3	32,631
<b>Florida</b>	17.9%	6.1%	25.4%	32.9%	17.6%	18,910,672

» **Per Capita Income**

County	Per Capita Income 2010	Source of Income		
		Labor	Property	Transfer
Columbia	\$26,231	65.1%	13.4%	21.5%
Gadsden	28,091	61.8	16.8	21.4
Gilchrist	27,691	66.9	11.9	21.2
Hamilton	20,114	59.6	10.1	30.3
Jefferson	28,551	63.1	15.9	21.0
Lafayette	18,363	63.7	12.0	24.3
Leon	35,809	76.1	18.6	5.4
Madison	23,515	53.9	13.4	32.7
Suwannee	27,165	54.9	15.3	29.7
Taylor	26,477	64.6	12.3	23.1
Wakulla	28,131	70.2	12.5	17.3
Florida	\$39,927	62.2%	26.5%	11.3%